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All of us are brought to this study by our own request made to our Higher Self.
—*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*

THEOSOPHY

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

TOWARD the end of her Third Message to the American Theosophists, H. P. Blavatsky spoke of the need of the reincarnating Ego for Ethics which "sink into and take hold of the real man." She then made what may be her most moving appeal:

> We are outwardly creatures of but a day; within we are eternal. Learn, then, well the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, and teach, practice, promulgate that system of life and thought which alone can save the coming races.

Two years later (1892), writing in the *Path,* William Q. Judge gave the reason for repeated emphasis on these teachings (in "Synthesis of Occult Science"):

> It is not alone because these doctrines are easily apprehended and beneficent to individuals, not only because they furnish, as they necessarily do, a solid foundation for ethics, or all human conduct, but because they are the very keynotes of the higher evolution of man. Without Karma and Reincarnation evolution is but a fragment; a process whose beginnings are unknown, and whose outcome cannot be discerned; a glimpse of what might be; a hope of what should be. But in the light of Karma and Reincarnation evolution becomes the logic of what *must* be. . . . Thousands of persons can understand these two principles, apply them as a basis of conduct, and weave them into the fabric of their lives, who may not be able to grasp the complete synthesis of that endless evolution of which these doctrines form so important a part. In thus affording even the superficial thinker and the weak or illogical reasoner a per-

fect basis for ethics and an unerring guide in life, Theosophy is building toward the future realization of the Universal Brotherhood and the higher evolution of man.

In these statements, which convey the heart of the Theosophic intention—showing the union, in the simplest terms, of science and religion, of evolution and ethics, and their interdependence for thinking man—we have an implicit account of why H.P.B. declared that "Theosophy alone" can save the Western world from sinking entirely into that "luxurious materialism in which it will decay and putrefy as civilizations have done." It was by reason of the rational basis for understanding human nature, supplied in Theosophy, that this claim was made. The explanations afforded in the teaching of the sevenfold man and the sevenfold universe give answers to the persisting and crucial questions for which conventional authorities have no acceptable reply.

Where in human life do the teachings of Karma and Reincarnation have obvious application? They apply, most directly, to the moral struggle in every human breast—to the problems of good and evil, to the longing for justice, and to mysteries involved in both birth and death. The moral struggle cannot be understood without knowledge of the dual nature of man; and the moral struggle can hardly be won without individual verification of that duality, or without deliberate choosing of what is right and good as a result. But the duality of man's nature remains vague and obscure without the metaphysics of man's seven principles and the teaching of the after-death states—all part of the doctrine of Karma and Reincarnation. These are psycho-moral realities we need to understand for ourselves. In this cycle, Mr. Judge wrote in the twelfth issue of the *Path,* "the final authority is *the man himself.*" His meaning, here, is elaborated in *The Ocean of Theosophy,* at the end of the sixth chapter, where he says that in this "age of inquiry" the demand for answers that satisfy the mind will continue to grow until there is a complete end to dogmatism, each man learning, finally, to face all problems for himself, and then to work for the good of all.

For this to come about, the reunion of science and religion—a restoration made possible by the metaphysics of the Secret Doctrine—is a practical necessity. For only through religious science, or scientific religion, can the individual free himself from dependence on external authority and accomplish the self-redemption which is both his spontaneous longing and the law of

his nature. By means of the teaching of Karma and Reincarnation, the individual can begin to understand himself, to recognize in himself the qualities of both the higher and the lower man; can see the basis of his existence in a long egoic past and build on the present for a better future. The ethical admonitions of the high religions acquire persuasive force from Karma and Reincarnation, since their fulfillment, in the light of these ideas, becomes a rational possibility. Acceptance of responsibility—the responsibility often felt but hardly understood—is seen as the mandate of natural duty, while misfortune is recognized as the effect of a just law bringing opportunity for recompense and growth. These realizations, indeed, are at the root of the processes of self-redemption—and without the teachings which make them possible, as Mr. Judge said, man's "evolution is but a fragment; a process whose beginnings are unknown, and whose outcome cannot be discerned." Again, without Karma and Reincarnation there can be no "scientific and self-compelling basis for right ethics," which now, more than ever, is the need of every rational human being.

What, then, of the host, the mind of the Western world, to which these teachings were brought in the last century, starting in 1875?

This was a time, as a glance at cultural history will show, when the saturation of the modern mind with the doctrines of scientific materialism was nearing completion. Darwin's Theory was rapidly being accepted, while the intellectually inadequate pseudoscience of the churches had been thoroughly exposed and was being rejected by all educated persons. As a consequence of the breakdown of faith, the moral restraints taught by traditional religion could now be regarded with indifference by the great majority of the intellectual classes. The demonstrations of physical science—through inventions and their technological applications—were convincing all progressive spirits that the way to human betterment lay with the methods of research and experiment, just as the pioneers of the Enlightenment had declared. At its best, and for a time, science had been an emancipating force, accomplishing undeniable improvement of material conditions. And it had obviously released many minds from bondage to dogma. There was, however, a price to be paid for the method of this liberation.

The themes of modern literature would soon spread throughout the educated world. "Modernism" was indeed in formation during

this period, with widely varied effects. In 1882 Nietzsche proclaimed, "God is dead," and two years earlier Dostoevsky had published *The Brothers Karamazov,* with its devastating analysis of conventional religious belief in the section, "Pro and Contra," containing the legend of the Grand Inquisitor. The aggressive materialism of Karl Marx was slowly spreading over Europe, among the dispossessed classes, and Freud (born in 1856) would before long shape the conceptions that would dominate the literary world during the first part of the twentieth century. While the essence of modernity is almost impossible to define, because of its diverse tendencies, a present-day critic has said that it "strongly implies some sort of historical discontinuity, either a liberation from inherited patterns or, at another extreme, deprivation and disinheritance." In the twentieth century, the feeling of being lost, defeated, and powerless comes out strongly in the novels of Franz Kafka, while other writers, feeling a brave determination to be themselves, sought to speak only out of their own certainties, trusting to nothing else. But certainties, in the modern world, are hard to come by, and the writers who adopted this stance report mainly their loneliness, their pain, and feelings of alienation.

For those of an extroverted, objective cast of mind, science easily took the place of religion, while among others art and politics became sanctified forms of action. Writing on this transition in the *Atlantic* for May, 1974, Octavio Paz said:

> Art inherited from the religion that had gone before, the power of consecrating things and imparting a sort of eternity to them: museums are our places of worship and the objects exhibited in them are beyond history; politics, or, to be more precise, revolution, meanwhile co-opted the other function of religion: changing man and society. Art was a spiritual heroism: revolution was the building of a universal church. The mission of the artist was to transmute the object; that of the revolutionary leader was to transform human nature. Picasso and Stalin. The process has been a twofold one: in the sphere of politics ideas were converted into ideologies and ideologies into idolatries; art objects in turn were made idols, and these idols transformed into ideas. We gaze upon works of art with the same reverent awe—though with fewer spiritual rewards—with which the sage of antiquity contemplated the starry sky above.

Meanwhile, in various ways, the artists revolted—mocking their patrons in a Dadaist frenzy, then becoming virtually psychic mediums during a cycle of surrealist irrationalism; and, finally, after

exhausting the meager potentialities of their subconscious being in abstract expressionism and various non-objective experiments, they turned to "pop" art and other trivialities. The incredible pretense and cultist novelties of much modern art is mercilessly dealt with by Tom Wolfe in "The Painted Word," a long article in *Harper's* for last April.

The disenchantment with scientific objectivity was long in coming for serious writers, but by the end of the second world war there was no mistaking the fact that science no longer held the same promise for thinkers of sensibility and reflective intelligence. In *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays,* Albert Camus spoke for many:

> Of whom and what indeed can I say: "I know that!" This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. The world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends my knowledge, and the rest is construction. For if I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers. . . .
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> These scents of grass and stars at night, certain evenings when the heart relaxes—how shall I negate this world whose power and strength I feel? Yet all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that the world is mine. You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerate its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. You take apart its mechanism and my hope increases. At the final stage you teach me that this wondrous and multicolored universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. . . . I shall never know.

It is enough, Camus exclaims, to make a decent man laugh! All these categories which "explain everything" have nothing, he says, to do with the mind.

In *Daedalus* for the Summer of 1974, Theodore Roszak spoke directly to Camus' complaint, pointing out that science, *qua* science, has precisely nothing to say to the human heart—nothing, indeed, to the longings that seek meaning in human life. It is only when, in a reflective mood, a distinguished scientist allows himself to speak simply as a human being, making some sort of philosophical counterpoint to physical discovery, that the rest of the world suddenly becomes attentive. As Mr. Roszak puts it:

> . . . have scientists never noticed how the lay public hangs upon these professions of wonder and ultimate belief, seemingly

> drawn to them with even more fascination than to great discoveries? If people want more from science than fact and theory, it is because there lingers on in all of us the need for gnosis. We want to know the meaning of our existence, and we want that meaning to ennoble our lives in a way that makes an enduring difference in the universe. We want that meaning not out of childish weakness of mind, but because we sense in the depths of us that it is *there,* a truth that belongs to us and completes our condition.

Scientists, if they do not learn to speak to this need, Roszak says, will deservedly forfeit the trust and allegiance of society. He recalls the popular myth of the "mad scientist"—the Frankensteins and Strangeloves—and asks if the vague fear of the public that scientists, with their "stripped-down, depersonalized conception of knowledge," might create monsters is, after all, so unreasonable.

> What is a monster? The child of knowledge without gnosis, of power without spiritual intelligence.

Earlier in this century there was a time of golden expectations from the progress of scientific inquiry. Dr. Einstein began it with his Theory of Relativity which no one—or practically no one—"understood," but in which was felt to be some strangely liberating truth. Then came the mathematical harmonies of Sir James Jeans, and his conception of a celestial geometry behind the configurations of matter and energy with which physicists deal. Arthur Eddington spoke of "mind-stuff" being at the root of all nature, and mathematical physicists such as Max Planck, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrodinger (who quoted the Upanishads), and some others seemed to deserve being called neo-Pythagoreans. The world was no longer material, but constellations of energy ordered in fields. So there was admiring optimism for a time, even if the theoretical foundation of the new physics was almost incomprehensible. But then, under the stress of "military necessity" and the apprehensions of scientific specialists who feared for the future of human freedom in a world ruled by conscienceless tyrants—out of this rarefied theory and almost other-worldly geometry, came the atom bomb and the Pandora's box of nuclear horrors which followed after. These "monsters" are now abroad in the world, ominously lurking in centers of power.

What has all this meant, in human terms, in philosophical—that is, Theosophical—terms?

Spread out before us, today, we see the institutional and cultural effects of mechanistic theories: theories which exclude understanding of man's dual nature, devoid of any basis for personal moral responsibility, and blind to the necessity for an individual union of science and religion—a grasp of both process and purpose—by each human being. Religion which knows nothing of the metaphysical structures that provide scope to the searchings of higher Manas either dies out entirely or turns into deforming psychism. At the same time, science which ignores the prior reality of consciousness, which rejects both the designing intelligence throughout nature and the presence of individualized mind in man, becomes only the practice of manipulative technique. Such a science remains indifferent in both definition and effect to the needs, hopes, and aspirations of humanity, and ends as the butler of man's grossest appetites, the skillful executor of his most destructive designs. Impersonal science without compassion recognizes only the virtue of cold calculation, while the fires of feeling, unguided by egoic intentions, consume and waste the resources of the intellectual principle.

We know from historical experience that institutional arrangements can never rise higher than their source, and when the organizations of knowledge upon which men rely are shaped by partisan reactions to earlier cultural failures—as was the case with all the sciences—the result is institutions which are locked in position by the qualities of lower Manas. Such institutions can do little more than implement compromise and failure, rationalizing the prevailing behavioral tendencies as "laws of nature" and unchangeable facts of life. This turns cultural history into little more than the study of the collective tendencies, vagaries, and weaknesses of lower Manas. Exceptions are heard only in the voices of perceptive individuals, raised in lonely dissent, and commonly ignored as atypical and statistically insignificant.

It becomes apparent, then, why Karma and Reincarnation are the key to the self-knowledge the age requires—why nothing else will serve. Through Karma and Reincarnation, as illuminators of the field of experience dimensioned by man's sevenfold nature, each one becomes able to recognize in himself the play, the pull, and the stirrings of the two-sided ego which is himself. He learns to mark for identification the motives coming from his highest being, and to recognize the distractions of personal indulgence and the selfishness which replace calm judgment and ob-

scure true human purpose. It is in this theater of conscious action, deliberation, and choice that human destiny is shaped and fulfilled. The logic of evolution requires knowledge of relative beginnings and endings, recognition of what was before and what will come after; and this is supplied by the teaching of the after-death states. Full comprehension may still lie in the future, but a sense of meaning is soon felt from reflection on these ideas—and the *sense* of meaning is the only capital we have to work with as human beings.

Even the sharpest intellects may remain without the essentials of self-understanding—and therefore without the essentials of cultural understanding—so long as the fundamental nature of man, as shown by Karma and Reincarnation, is ignored. Consider for example the vigorous attempt by Sidney Hook, in 1943, to stem the tide of religious renewal which was then, in the midst of the war, beginning to manifest on the American scene. As spokesman for the community of scientifically-minded intellectuals, Prof. Hook wrote for *Partisan Review* on "The New Failure of Nerve." After naming and quoting various writers who had succumbed to "intellectual panic"—embracing traditional forms of supernaturalism—he made this generalizing comment:

> Distrust of scientific method is transformed into open hostility whenever some privileged "private truth" pleads for exemption from the tests set up to safeguard the intelligence from illusion. The pleas for exemption take many forms. They are rarely open and direct as in the frenzy of Kierkegaard who frankly throws overboard his intelligence in order to make those leaps of despairing belief which convert his private devils into transcendent absolutes. Usually these pleas are presented as corollaries of special *theories* of knowledge, being, or experience. There are some who interpret science and discursive knowledge generally as merely a method of confirming what we *already* know in a dim but sure way by other modes of experience. If the methods of scientific inquiry do not yield this confirmation, they are held to be at fault; some other way must be found of validating and confirming primal wisdom. Others maintain that scientific method can give us only partial truths which become less partial not by subjecting them to careful scrutiny but by incorporating them into a theological or metaphysical system whose cardinal principles are true but not testable by any method known to science. Still others openly declare it to be axiomatic that every experience, every feeling and emotion, directly reports a truth that cannot be warranted, and does not need to be warranted, by experiment or inference.

> These, bluntly put, are gateways to intellectual and moral irresponsibility. . . .

This precise and apparently impartial statement, summing up the outlook of the Enlightenment and its high expectations of scientific knowledge, and assuming for it basic cultural stability, has since been shown to have very weak foundations. Michael Polanyi and others have pointed out that science itself rests upon assumptions which are by no means objectively "testable," but originate in the moral qualities of human beings. Maslow has demonstrated the importance to both science and psychology of subjective sources of knowledge, and the riches of man's inner life are now recognized and appreciated much more widely, even if hardly understood. The movement toward revival of religious ideas and thinking continues, unabashed by Prof. Hook's charges, despite the fact that the *spirit* of his contentions has in it much that religionists could profit by. It is just here, in the lack of give and take of institutional formulations, that the chief trouble lies. Prof. Hook champions a tough-minded methodology, but the assumptions of that methodology refuse recognition to the high and inspiring quality of Kierkegaard's longing, which by no means deserves the cavalier treatment received from him.

Prof. Hook also says:

> If one accepts the religionists' assumption that values can be grounded only on a true religion and metaphysics, together with their views about the ideal causation of events, it could be legitimately urged against them that the bankruptcy of civilization testifies to the bankruptcy of their metaphysics. For if science is irrelevant to values, it cannot corrupt them; and if theology and metaphysics are their sacred guardian, they are responsible for the world we live in.

Here the attack is against a straw man, for while the bankruptcy of civilization is at least half due to the failures of religion, it is not always these failures that the rising spirit of religious inquiry seeks to revive. Meanwhile, to say that science cannot corrupt values is to ignore all the disastrous moral effects of materialism, so well enumerated by Mumford, Roszak, and others, and to be blind to the unregulated impulses it not only encourages but engenders, to fill the vacuum of scientific purposelessness.

Yet, once again, Prof. Hook's insistence upon discipline and impartiality in human inquiry has manifest justification. The weakness of his claim lies in its limitation of the field of investigation to the areas submissive to the scientific method, not in the de-

mand for rigor in research. For, after all, the ideals of impartiality and clarity come from the same aspect of man's nature as other ideals—including the aspiration behind Kierkegaard's "despairing leaps"—and it is only when reflected in the personal consciousness that they are dwarfed by the intellectual limitations of the age.

Needed for the expansion of the scope of science, and for a higher rationality in religion, is the system of metaphysical thought of which Karma and Reincarnation are the defining principles. In this system religious aspirations and scientific rigor are inseparably joined.

"KARMA IS THE MAN"

What is the relation of Karma to the life of the individual? Is there nothing for man to do but to weave the chequered warp and woof of each earthly existence with the stained and discolored threads of past actions? Good resolves and evil tendencies sweep with resistless tide over the nature of man.

Although at first it may appear that nothing can be more fatalistic than this doctrine, yet a little consideration will show that in reality this is not the case. Karma is twofold, hidden and manifest, Karma is the man that is, Karma is his action. True that each action is a cause from which evolves the countless ramifications of effect in time and space.

Every man, however, is endowed with conscience and the power to use his life, whatever its form or circumstance, in the proper way, so as to extract from it all the good for himself and his fellows that his limitations of character will permit. It is his duty so to do, and as he neglects or obeys, so will be his subsequent *punishment* or *reward*.

—WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

letters • questions • comment

There seems a further dimension to the question of selfhood, in addition to the familiar "search for identity." The problem is not only to discover who we are, but to try to be *the Higher Ego: that is, to take the position of the Perceiver in daily life, and to act from that vantage point. Do our various conceptions of self contribute anything to making this position more real in our lives?*

It seems evident that thought about self will vary according to both motive and understanding. The higher Self, universal and unconditionally immortal in all men, is completely conscious only in men of the stature of the Buddha. But, in the terms of our understanding, a Buddha is one only *in action,* that is, in manifestation, whether in a physical body or not. His achievement lies in his capacity to act in behalf of the other beings in the stream of evolution. Otherwise his perfection would cut him off from all others still engaged in the process of learning. Our various conceptions of self may—or may not—contribute to reaching toward this high realization.

We might think there are two kinds of reality suggested by the analogy of the actor and the parts he plays. One is the unchanging, the always perceiving self, whatever the perceptions; the other is represented by the parts given vitality and meaning and seeming independence by the will of the actor. The parts are relative realities. Yet "evolution" means making those parts into vehicles of egoic intent—breathing depth into the parts brought to life. In her article, "Genius," H.P.B. speaks of the potentialities inherent in all men:

> No Ego differs from another Ego, in its primordial or original essence and nature. That which makes one mortal a great man and of another a vulgar, silly person is, as said, the quality and make-up of the physical shell or casing, and the adequacy or inadequacy of brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the real, *Inner* man; and this aptness or inaptness is, in its turn, the result of Karma. Or, to use another simile, physical man is the musical instrument, and the Ego, the performing artist. The potentiality of perfect melody of sound, is in the former—the instrument—and no skill of the latter can awaken a faultless harmony out of a broken or badly made

> instrument. This harmony depends on the fidelity of transmission, by word or act, to the objective plane, of the unspoken divine thought in the very depths of man's subjective or inner nature.

This shows why it is important to make clear the identity of the actor in us, as well as to understand the identities developed in the parts the Perceiver assumes. Spiritual action on this plane requires that the forces involved reflect this motivation, appropriately to their degree of intelligence.

Intellectual formulations draw the attention of the mind to the fact that the Buddhi-Manasic consciousness in man is the real, permanent actor, not the parts. They help to make the Perceiver, in whatever guise he acts, real to us in daily life. On another level, the true virtues—not those of custom, which vary with time and place, but the qualities described in *The Voice of the Silence*—help to make the psychic nature responsive to the higher Ego. Ethical awareness unites the universal communication of virtuous actions with the rational explanation of things as they are, through the powers of mind, transmuting or sublimating the living matter of the soul's sheaths.

H.P.B.'s dialogue, "Life and Death," distinguishes between what we are and what we *think* we are. Describing the effect of the beliefs of one belonging to a sect that denies immortality of the soul, in relation to his state of consciousness after death, the sage, Thakur, says:

> In the fundamental laws of the spiritual world there can be no exceptions; but there are laws for the blind and laws for those who see. . . .
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> You speak about the spirit of the spirit, that is to say about the Atma, confusing this spirit with the soul of the mortal, with Manas. No doubt the spirit is immortal, because being without beginning it is without end; but it is not the spirit that is concerned in the present conversation. It is the human, self-conscious soul.

The parts have temporary reality; the animating spirit is a permanent reality. Insofar as the actor, the Perceiver, realizes and embodies his knowledge in the personalities of the parts he plays, that knowledge becomes permanent reality—the higher Ego incarnated on this plane. Conscious, first-hand knowledge of what we really are, then, arises from the effort to share self-realization with all the lower forms which extend our radius of perception while in incarnation.

STUDIES IN ISIS UNVEILED

EVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

ESOTERIC philosophers held that everything in nature is but a materialization of spirit. The Eternal First Cause is latent spirit and matter from the beginning. While conceding the idea of such a God to be an unthinkable abstraction to human reason, they claimed that the unerring human instinct grasped it as a reminiscence of something concrete to it though intangible to our physical senses. With the first idea, which emanated from the double-sexed and hitherto-inactive Deity, the first motion was communicated to the whole universe, and the electric thrill was instantaneously felt throughout the boundless space. Spirit begat force, and force matter; and thus the latent deity manifested itself as a creative energy.

When; at what point of the eternity; or how? the question must always remain unanswered; for human reason is unable to grasp the great mystery. But, though spirit-matter was from all eternity, it was in the latent state; the evolution of our visible universe must have had a beginning. This mystery of first creation, which was ever the despair of science, is unfathomable, unless we accept the doctrine of the Hermetists. Though matter is co-eternal with spirit, that matter is certainly not our visible, tangible, and divisible matter, but its extreme sublimation. Pure spirit is but one remove higher. Unless we allow man to have been evolved out of this primordial spirit-matter, how can we ever come to any reasonable hypothesis as to the genesis of animate beings?

The esoteric doctrine, then, teaches, like Buddhism and Brahmanism, and even the persecuted *Kabala*, that the one infinite and unknown Essence exists from all eternity, and in regular and harmonious successions is either passive or active. Upon inaugurating an active period, an expansion of this Divine essence, *from within outwardly*, occurs in obedience to eternal and immutable law, and the phenomenal or visible universe is the ultimate result

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NOTE.—This article is made up of passages from *Isis Unveiled*, topically arranged. The pages from which the statements are taken are given at the conclusion of the article. This article is part of a series that was first printed in volumes 5 and 6 of THEOSOPHY.

of the long chain of cosmical forces thus progressively set in motion. In like manner, when the passive condition is resumed, a contraction of the Divine essence takes place, and the previous work of creation is gradually and progressively undone. The visible universe becomes disintegrated, its material dispersed; and "darkness" solitary and alone, broods once more over the face of the "deep." To use a metaphor which will convey the idea still more clearly, an outbreathing of the "unknown essence" produces the world; and an inhalation causes it to disappear. *This process has been going on from all eternity, and our present universe is but one of an infinite series which had no beginning and will have no end.*

The successive existence of an incalculable number of worlds before the subsequent evolution of our own, was believed in and taught by all the ancient peoples. The Hindu doctrines teach of two *Pralayas* or dissolutions; one universal, the Maha-Pralaya, the other partial, or the minor Pralaya. This does not relate to the universal dissolution which occurs at the end of every "Day of Brahma," but to the geological cataclysms at the end of every minor cycle of our globe. A partial cataclysm occurs at the close of every "age" of the world, which does not destroy the latter, but only changes its general appearance. New races of men and animals and a new flora evolve from the dissolution of the precedent ones.

As well as man, and every other living thing upon it, our planet has had its spiritual and physical evolution. From an impalpable ideal *thought* under the creative Will of Him of whom we know nothing, and but dimly conceive in imagination, this globe became fluidic and *semi*-spiritual, then condensed itself more and more, until its physical development compelled it to try its own creative faculty. Our physical planet is but the hand-maiden, or rather the maid-of-all-work, of the spirit, its master. The allegorical curse under which it labors, is that it only *procreates*, it does not *create*. And this curse will last until the minutest particle of matter on earth shall have outlived its days, until every grain of dust has, by gradual transformation through evolution, become a constituent part of a "living soul," and, until the latter shall reascend the cyclic arc, and finally stand—its own Redeeming Spirit—at the foot of the upper step of the spiritual worlds, as at the first hour of its emanation. Beyond that lies the great "Deep" —A MYSTERY. The ancients were philosophers, consistent in all

things. Hence they taught that each of these departed worlds, having performed its physical evolution, and reached—through birth, growth, maturity, old age, and death—the end of its cycle, had returned to its primitive subjective form of a *spiritual* earth. Thereafter it had to serve through all eternity as the dwelling of those who had lived on it as men, and even animals, but were now spirits.

Eternity is pointed off into grand cycles, in each of which twelve transformations of our world occur, following its partial destruction by fire and water, alternately. Of these twelve transformations, the earth after each of the first six is grosser, and everything on it—man included—more material, than after the preceding one: while after each of the remaining six, the contrary is true, both earth and man growing more and more refined and spiritual with each terrestrial change. When the apex of the cycle is reached, a gradual dissolution takes place, and every living and objective form is destroyed. But when that point is reached, humanity has become fitted to live subjectively as well as objectively. And not humanity alone, but also animals, plants, and every atom. After a time of rest, say the Buddhists, when a new world becomes self-formed, the astral souls of animals and of all beings, except such as have reached the highest Nirvana, will return on earth again to end their cycles of transformations, and become men in their turn. If there is a developed immortal spirit in man, it must be in everything else, at least in a latent or germinal state, and it can only be a question of time for each of these germs to become fully developed. Logic shows us that as all matter had a common origin, it must have attributes in common, and as the vital and divine spark is in man's material body, so it must lurk in every subordinate species. The Hermetists held that every particle of matter contains within itself a spark of the divine essence—or light, *spirit*—which, through its tendency to free itself from its entanglement and return to the central source, produced motion in the particles, and from motion forms were born. As by gradual progression from the star-cloudlet to the development of the physical body of man, the rule holds good, so from the universal ether to the incarnate human spirit, they traced one uninterrupted series of entities. These evolutions were from the world of spirit into the world of gross matter; and through that back again to the source of all things. The "descent of species" was to them a descent from the spirit, primal

source of all, to the "degradation of matter."

The pre-existence and God-like powers of the human spirit were believed in by most all the sages of ancient days. The slow development from pre-existing forms was a doctrine with the Rosicrucian Illuminati. The Platonic philosophy was one of order, system, and proportion; it embraced the evolution of worlds and species, the correlation and conservation of energy, the transmutation of material form, the indestructibility of matter and of spirit. The Pythagorean *Monad,* which lives "in solitude and darkness," may remain on this earth forever invisible, impalpable, and undemonstrated by experimental science. Still, the whole universe will be gravitating around it, as it did from the "beginning of time," and with every second, man and atom approach nearer to that solemn moment in the eternity, when the Invisible Presence will become clear to their spiritual sight. When every particle of matter, even the most sublimated, has been cast off from the last shape that forms the ultimate link of that chain of double evolution which, throughout millions of ages and successive transformations, has pushed the entity onward; and when it shall find itself reclothed in that primordial essence; identical with that of its Creator, then this once impalpable organic atom will have run its race, and the sons of God will once more "shout for joy" at the return of the pilgrim.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul dates from the time when the soul was an *objective* being, hence when it could hardly be denied by *itself;* when humanity was a spiritual race and death existed not. Toward the decline of the cycle of life, the ethereal *man-spirit* then fell into the sweet slumber of temporary unconsciousness in one sphere, only to find himself awakening in the still brighter light of a higher one. But while the spiritual man is ever striving to ascend higher and higher toward its source of being, passing through the cycles and spheres of individual life, physical man had to descend with the great cycle of universal creation until it found itself clothed with the terrestrial garments. Thenceforth the soul was too deeply buried under physical clothing to reassert its existence, except in the cases of those more spiritual natures, which, with every cycle, became more rare. And yet none of the pre-historical nations ever thought of denying either the existence or the immortality of the inner man, the real "self." Only, we must bear in mind the teachings of the old philosophies: the spirit alone is immortal

—the soul, *per se*, is neither eternal nor divine. When linked too closely with the physical brain of its terrestrial casket, it gradually becomes a *finite* mind, a simple animal and sentient life-principle. The cycle is moving down, and, as it descends, the physical and bestial nature of man develops more and more at the expense of the Spiritual Self.

Man before being encased in matter had no use for limbs, but was a pure spiritual entity. Hence if the Deity, and his universe, and the stellar bodies are to be conceived as spheroidal, this shape would be archetypal man's. As his enveloping shell grew heavier, there came the necessity for limbs, and the limbs sprouted. If we fancy a man with arms and legs naturally extended at the same angle, by backing him against the circle that symbolizes his prior shape as a spirit, we would have the very figure described by Plato—the X cross within the circle. The grand cycle includes the progress of mankind from its germ in the primordial man of spiritual form to the deepest depth of degradation he can reach—each successive step in the descent being accompanied by a greater strength and grossness of the physical form than its precursor. But while the grand cycle, or age, is running its course, seven minor cycles are passed, each marking the evolution of a new race out of the preceding one, on a new world. And each of these races, or grand types of humanity, breaks up into subdivisions of families, and they again into nations and tribes.

The "coats of skin," mentioned in the third chapter of *Genesis* as given to Adam and Eve, are explained by certain ancient philosophers to mean the fleshy bodies with which, in the progress of the cycles, the progenitors of the race became clothed. They maintained that the god-like physical form became grosser and grosser, until the bottom of what may be termed the last spiritual cycle was reached, and mankind entered upon the ascending arc of the first human cycle. Then began an uninterrupted series of cycles or *yogas**; the precise number of years of which each of them consisted remaining an inviolable mystery within the precincts of the sanctuaries and disclosed only to the initiates. As soon as humanity entered upon a new one, the stone age, with which the preceding cycle had closed, began to gradually merge into the following and next higher age. With each successive age, or epoch, men grew more refined, until the acme of perfection possible in that particular cycle had been reached. Then the reced-

*This is evidently a typographical error. The correct word is *yugas*. [EDS. THEOSOPHY.]

ing wave of time carried back with it the vestiges of human, social, and intellectual progress. Cycle succeeded cycle, by imperceptible transitions; highly-civilized flourishing nations waxed in power, attained the climax of development, waned, and became extinct; and mankind, when the end of the lower cyclic arc was reached, was replunged into barbarism as at the start. Kingdoms have crumbled and nation succeeded nation from the beginning until our day, the races alternately mounting to the highest and descending to the lowest points of development. *These cycles,* according to the Chaldean philosophy, *do not embrace all mankind at one and the same time.* Draper observes that there is no reason to suppose that any one cycle applied to the whole human race. On the contrary, while man in one portion of the planet was in a condition of retrogression, in another he might be progressing in enlightenment and civilization. Whether or not the men of science are willing to concede the correctness of the Hermetic theory of the physical evolution of man from higher and more spiritual natures, they themselves show us how the race has progressed from the lowest observed point to its present development. And, as all nature seems to be made up of analogies, is it unreasonable to affirm that the same progressive development of individual forms has prevailed among the inhabitants of the *unseen* universe? While they made no attempt to calculate the duration of the "grand cycle," the Hermetic philosophers yet maintained that, according to the cyclic law, the living human race must inevitably and collectively return one day to that point of departure, where man was first clothed with "coats of skin"; or, to express it more clearly, the human race must, in accordance with the law of evolution, be finally *physically* spiritualized. We must go deep indeed into the abstruse metaphysics of Oriental mysticism before we can realize fully the infinitude of the subjects that were embraced at one sweep by the majestic thought of its exponents.

Modern science insists upon the doctrine of evolution; so do human reason and the "secret doctrine," and the idea is corroborated by the ancient legends and myths, and even by the Bible itself when it is read between the lines. We see a flower slowly developing from a bud, and the bud from its seed. But whence the latter, with all its predetermined programme of physical transformation, and its invisible, therefore *spiritual forces* which gradually develop its form, color, and odor? The word *evolution* speaks for itself. The germ of the present human race must have

pre-existed in the parent of this race. Physical man, as a product of evolution, may be left in the hands of the man of exact science. None but he can throw light upon the *physical* origin of the race. But we must positively deny the materialist the same privilege as to the question of man's psychical and spiritual evolution, for he and his highest faculties *cannot* be proved on any conclusive evidence to be "as much products of evolution as the humblest plant or the lowest worm." If those who believe in the evolution of *spirit* as firmly as the materialists believe in that of *matter* are charged with teaching "unverifiable hypotheses," how readily can they retort upon their accusers by saying that, by *their* own confession, their physical evolution is still "an unverified, if not actually an unverifiable hypothesis." The former have at least the inferential proof of legendary myth, the vast antiquity of which is admitted by both philologists and archæologists; while their antagonists have nothing of a similar nature. For a belief to have become universal, it must have been founded on an immense accumulation of facts, tending to strengthen it, from one generation to another. The universe is the combination of a thousand elements, and yet the expression of a single spirit—a chaos to the sense, a cosmos to the reason. In the Mysteries were symbolized the pre-existent condition of the spirit and soul, and the lapse of the latter into earth-life and Hades, the miseries of that life, the purification of the soul, and its restoration to divine bliss, or reunion with spirit. The sacred numbers of the universe in their esoteric combination solve the great problem and explain the theory of radiation and the cycle of the emanations. The lower orders before they develop into higher ones must emanate from the higher spiritual ones, and when arrived at the turning point, be re-absorbed again into the infinite. The key to the Pythagorean dogmas is the general formula of unity in multiplicity, the one evolving the many and pervading the many. This is the ancient doctrine of emanation in few words. Even the apostle Paul accepted it as true. "Out of him and through him and in him all things are." This is purely Hindu and Brahmanical. The present earth-life is a fall and a punishment. The soul dwells in "the grave which we call *the body,*" and in its incorporate state, and previous to the discipline of education, the noetic or spiritual element is "asleep." Life is thus a dream, rather than a reality. Is not this the idea of *Maya,* or the illusion of the senses in physical life, which is so marked a feature in Buddhistical philosophy?

Basing all his doctrines on the presence of the Supreme Mind, Plato taught that the *nous,* spirit, or rational soul of man, possessed a nature kindred, or even homogeneous, with the Divinity, and was capable of beholding the eternal realities. The basis of this assimilation is always asserted to be the pre-existence of the spirit or *nous*. The greatest philosopher of the pre-Christian era mirrored faithfully in his works the spiritualism of the Vedic philosophers who lived thousands of years before himself, and its metaphysical expression. Thus is warranted the inference that to Plato and the ancient Hindu sages was alike revealed the same wisdom. So surviving the shock of time, what can this wisdom be but divine and eternal?

What was a demonstration and a success in the eyes of Plato and his disciples is now considered the overflow of a spurious philosophy and a failure. The scientific methods are reversed. The testimony of the men of old, who were nearer to truth, for they were nearer to the spirit of nature—the only aspect under which the Deity will allow itself to be viewed and understood—and their demonstrations, are rejected. The whole of the present work is a protest against such a loose way of judging the ancients. To be thoroughly competent to criticize their ideas, and assure one's self whether their ideas were distinct and "appropriate to the facts," one must have sifted these ideas to the very bottom. It is idle to repeat that which we have frequently said, and that which every scholar ought to know; namely, that the quintessence of their knowledge was in the hands of the priests, who never wrote them, and in those of the initiates who, like Plato, *did not dare* write them. In no country were the true esoteric doctrines trusted to writing. Therefore, those few speculations on the material and spiritual universes, which they did put in writing, could not enable posterity to judge them rightly, even had not the early Christian Vandals, the later crusaders, and the fanatics of the middle ages destroyed three parts of that which remained of the Alexandrian library and its later schools. Who, then, of those who turn away from the "secret doctrine" as being "unphilosophical" and, therefore, unworthy of a scientific thought, has a right to say that he studied the ancients; that he is aware of all they knew, and knowing now far more, knows also that they knew little, if anything? This "secret doctrine" contains the alpha and omega of universal science; therein lies the corner and the keystone of all the ancient and modern knowledge; and alone in this "unphilo-

sophical" doctrine remains buried the *absolute* in the philosophy of the dark problems of life and death.

Thus it is that all the religious monuments of old, in whatever land or under whatever climate, are the expression of the same identical thoughts, the key to which is in the esoteric doctrine. It would be vain, without studying the latter, to seek to unriddle the mysteries enshrouded for centuries in the temples and ruins of Egypt and Assyria, or those of Central America, British Columbia, and the Nagkon-Wat of Cambodia. If each of these was built by a different nation; and neither nation had had intercourse with the others for ages, it is also certain that all were planned and built under the direct supervision of the priests. And the clergy of every nation, although practicing rites and ceremonies which may have differed externally, had evidently been initiated into the same traditional mysteries which were taught all over the world. As cycle succeeded cycle, and one nation after another came upon the world's stage to play its brief part in the majestic drama of human life, each new people evolved from ancestral traditions its own religion, giving it a local color, and stamping it with its individual characteristics. While each of these religions had its distinguishing traits, by which, were there no other archaic vestiges, the physical and psychological status of its creators could be estimated, all preserved a common likeness to one prototype. This parent cult was none other than the primitive "wisdom-religion." We can assert, with entire plausibility, that there is not one of all these sects—Kabalism, Judaism, and our present Christianity included—but sprung from the two main branches of that one mother-trunk, the once universal religion, which antedated the Vedic ages—we speak of that prehistoric Buddhism which merged later into Brahmanism.

Many and various are the nationalities to which belong the disciples of that mysterious school, and many the side-shoots of that one primitive stock. The secrecy preserved by these sub-lodges, as well as by the one and supreme great lodge, has ever been proportionate to the activity of religious persecutions; and now, in the face of the growing materialism, their very existence is becoming a mystery. But it must not be inferred, on that account, that such a mysterious brotherhood is but a fiction, not even a *name,* though it remains unknown to this day. Whether its affiliates are called by an Egyptian, Hindu, or Persian name, it matters not.

Most assuredly, no one could expect to find, in a work open

to the public, the final mysteries of that which was preserved for countless ages as the grandest secret of the sanctuary. But, without divulging the key to the profane, or being taxed with undue indiscretion, we may be allowed to lift a corner of the veil which shrouds the majestic doctrines of old. The key must be turned *seven* times before the whole system is divulged. We will give it but *one* turn, and thereby allow the profane one glimpse into the mystery. Happy he, who understands the whole!

NOTE.—The volume and page references to *Isis Unveiled* from which the foregoing article is compiled, are, in the order of the excerpts, as follows: i, 428; i, 429; ii, 264-5; ii, 424; ii, 420; ii, 455-6; i, 330; i, 433; i, 285; i, 251; i, 257; i, 238; i, 212-13; ii, 361-62; ii, 366; ii, 469; ii, 263; i, 293-4; i, 6; i, 294 i, 295; i, 296; i, 297; i, 152; i, 153; i, 155; i, 612; i, xvi; i, xiv; i, 7; i, xvi; i, xiii; i, xiv; i, xiii; i, 424; i, 510; i, 271, f.n.; i, 511; i, 561; ii, 216; ii, 123; ii, 307; ii, 460; ii, 461.

BEYOND BEING AND FORM

Generative of all, the Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quantity nor quality nor intellect nor soul; not in motion, not at rest, not in place, not in time; it is the self-defined, unique in form or, better, formless, existing before Form was, or Movement or Rest, all of which are attachments of Being and make Being the manifold it is.

The soul or mind reaching towards the formless finds itself incompetent to grasp where nothing bounds it or to take impression where the impinging reality is diffuse; in sheer dread of holding to nothingness, it slips away. The state is painful; often it seeks relief by retreating from all this vagueness to the region of sense, there to rest as on solid ground, just as the sight distressed by the minute rests with pleasure on the bold.

We are in search of unity; we are to come to know the principle of all, the Good and First; therefore we may not stand away from the realm of Firsts and lie prostrate among the lasts: we must strike for those Firsts, rising from things of sense which are the lasts.

—PLOTINUS

on the lookout

Do Trees Have "Rights"?

Three years ago, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled (by a bare majority) against the Sierra Club's contention that the plan of Disney Enterprises, Inc., to develop the Mineral King area of California's Sierra Nevada Mountains into a recreational resort would adversely affect the ecology of the region, Justice William O. Douglas' dissenting opinion was widely quoted in the press. The eminent jurist, also a famous conservationist, declared that rivers, trees, lakes, and mountains—even fish, aquatic insects, deer, elk, bear, and "all other animals"—have rights which ought to be recognized and defended in the courts by appropriate spokesmen. Publication of this view attracted much attention among the ecology-minded, and the Douglas opinion was quoted again and again. Of particular interest, therefore, is publication in book form of a paper which was cited by Justice Douglas at the beginning of his dissent—"Should Trees Have Standing?", which first appeared in the *Southern California Law Review* for the Spring of 1972. In this paper—now a book of the same title (published last year by William Kauffman, Inc., Los Altos, Calif.)—the author, Christopher D. Stone (who teaches law at the University of Southern California), develops the background for Justice Douglas' contention in his dissent. His arguments make a good illustration of the subtleties which may lie back of legal opinions and decisions.

To Overcome Separateness

Our interest, here, is in the philosophical reflections with which the paper concludes. Mr. Stone says:

> A radical new conception of man's relationship to the rest of nature would not only be a step towards solving the material planetary problems; there are strong reasons for such a changed consciousness from the point of making us better humans. . . .
>
> To be able to get away from the view that Nature is a collection of useful senseless objects is . . . deeply involved in the development of our abilities to love—or, if that is putting it too strongly, to be able to reach a heightened awareness of

our own, and others' capacities in their mutual interplay. To do so, we have to give up some psychic investment in our sense of separateness and specialness in the universe. And this, in turn, is hard giving indeed, because it involves us in a flight backwards, into earlier stages of civilization and childhood in which we had to trust (and perhaps fear) our environment, for we had not then the power to master it. Yet, in doing so, we—as persons—gradually free ourselves of needs for supportive illusions. Is not this one of the triumphs for "us" of our giving legal rights to (or acknowledging the legal rights of) the Blacks and women? . . .

Toward Fellowship with All Life

The Vietnam war has contributed to this movement, as it has to others. Five years ago a Los Angeles mother turned out a poster which read "War is not Healthy for children and other living things." It caught on tremendously—at first, I suspect, because it sounded like another clever protest against the war, *i.e.*, another angle. But as people say such things, and think about them, the possibilities of what they have stumbled upon become manifest—in its suit against the Secretary of Agriculture to cancel the registration of D.D.T., Environmental Defense Fund alleged "biological injury to man and other living things." A few years ago the pollution of streams was thought of only as a problem of smelly, unsightly, unpotable water, *i.e.*, to us. Now we are beginning to discover that pollution is a process that destroys wondrously subtle balances of life within the water, and also between the water and its banks. This heightened awareness enlarges our sense of the dangers to us. But it also enlarges our empathy. We are not only developing the scientific capacity, but we are cultivating the personal capacities *within us* to recognize more and more the ways in which nature—like the woman, the Black, the Indian and the Alien—is like us (and we will also become more able realistically to define, confront, live with and admire the ways in which we are all different).

Man—Nature's Mind?

The time may be on hand when these sentiments, and the early stirrings of the law, can be coalesced into a radical new theory or myth—felt as well as intellectualized—of man's relationships to the rest of nature. I do not mean "myth" in a demeaning sense of the term, but in the sense in which, at different times in history, our social "facts" and relationships have been comprehended and integrated by reference to the "myths" that we are co-signers of a social contract, that the Pope is God's agent, and that all men are created equal. Pantheism, Shinto and Tao all have myths to offer. But they are all, each in its own fashion, quaint, primitive and archaic. What

is needed is a myth that can fit our growing body of knowledge of geophysics, biology and the cosmos. In this vein, I do not think it too remote that we may come to regard the Earth, as some have suggested, as one organism, of which Mankind is a functional part—the mind, perhaps: different from the rest of nature, but different as man's brain is from his lungs.

Role of the Court

We can forgive Prof. Stone's condescension toward ancient myths as "quaint" and dated, in view of his impressive grasp of the needs of the modern world. Actually, a better awareness of the import of ancient symbolism and allegory might be all the "updating" we need, since thinking through to the real meanings of old myths would indeed renew them for present understanding, opening the way to new applications and mythopoeic extensions in our own time. It is of special interest that this professor of law concludes by remarking that the true value of the Supreme Court may not be in the decisions it hands down, but in its influence on the thinking of all the people, sometimes having the effect of "summoning up from the human spirit the kindest and most generous and worthy ideas that abound there, giving them shape and reality and legitimacy." In illustration, he suggests that the School Desegregation Cases which, while laggard in implementation, nonetheless awakened a great many people to the moral issues involved. Similarly, he says, court actions in behalf of the environment, while modest enough in their initial scope, should also contribute to the deepening moral awareness of the time.

Organizational Delusions

An interesting comment on the ecumenical movement in modern Christianity appeared in the *Churchman* for March. The writer, C. Stanley Lowell, a Methodist clergyman who is author of *The Great Church-State Fraud*, says:

> The basic premise of ecumenism is that the Christian movement would be at its best if all its diverse elements were joined in one religious organization featuring a gray consensus of beliefs which all participants could accept. Bent on achieving such a consensus, ecumenists vie with one another in surrendering convictions to achieve it. . . . What the professional ecumenist fails to grasp is that freedom leads inevitably to diversity. The only way to curb diversity is to curb freedom. If the . . . ecumenists have their way and achieve their super church which takes in everybody, they will do it at the expense of freedom. The suspicion is that they understand this. Do

ecumenists really care about freedom? Would they prefer a spiritual monolith created and tailored by themselves?

Loyalty Is to Cause

Dr. Lowell's point is well taken. Organizational unity has little to do with service to truth, and brotherhood is a far deeper matter than a fellowship of organizations, or even "one big organization." The real teachers down the ages have spoken to human beings, not to organizations. They addressed themselves to the problems of mankind, not to the apparatus of denominations or other sorts of religious bodies. An organization is a tool, not something inviolable and sacred when it no longer serves the purpose for which it was formed. One recalls that H.P.B. said, in "A Puzzle from Adyar," that "the degree of her sympathies with 'The Theosophical Society and Adyar' depends upon the degree of loyalty of that Society to the CAUSE: Let it break away from the original lines and show disloyalty in its policy to the CAUSE and the original programme of the Society, and H.P.B., calling the T.S. *disloyal,* will shake it off like dust from her feet."

"The Basic Mutual Relation"

In his turn, Mr. Judge wrote (in "The Theosophical Movement") that "to worship an organization, even though it be the beloved theosophical one, is to fall down before Form, and to become the slave once more of that dogmatism which our portion of the Theosophical Movement, the T.S., was meant to overthrow." He also wrote in a letter:

> Organizations, like men, may fall into ruts or grooves of mental and psychic action, which once established are difficult to obliterate. To prevent those ruts or grooves in the Theosophical movement, its guardians provided that necessary shocks should now and then interpose so as to conduce to solidarity, to give strength such as the oak obtains from buffeting the storm, and in order that all grooves of mind, act, or thought, might be filled up. . . .
>
> Woe is set apart—not by Masters but by Nature's laws—for those who, having started in the path with the aid of H.P.B., shall in any way try to belittle her and her work, still as yet not understood, and by many misunderstood. This does not mean that a mere person is to be slavishly followed. But to explain her away, to belittle her, to imagine vain explanations to do away with what is not liked in that which she said, is to violate the ideal, is to spit back in the face of the teacher through whom the knowledge and the opportunity came, to befoul the river which brought you sweet waters.

And in another letter he said:

> I think the way for all western theosophists is through H.P.B. I mean that she is the T.S. incarnate—its mother and guardian, its creator. . . . I mean that they who do not understand the basic mutual relation, who undervalue *her* gift and *her* creation, have not imbibed the teaching and cannot assimiliate its benefits.

Challenge to Science

These are changing times. The conservative scientific journal, *Nature*, published in England, last October (1974) printed a report of experiments in extra-sensory perception at Stanford University, calling on scientists either to join or refute the non-scientific millions who are convinced that human consciousness has more than the five senses for real perception. An editorial in the *New York Times* (Nov. 6, 1974) took note of this article in *Nature* as "an important step to stimulate scientific discourse, openly posing the issue 'whether science has yet developed the competence to confront claims of the paranormal'." The *Times* reproved "scientific orthodoxy" for lagging behind the interests and beliefs of a generation which is reading assiduously in what are called "occult" areas. The essence of science, the *Times* declared, "should be receptivity to new ideas."

A Golden Opportunity

We may remember that in 1882—only seven years short of a century ago—H.P.B. offered the newly formed London Society for Psychical Research "the assistance of our thirty-seven Asiatic Branches in carrying out their investigations." (*Theosophist* III, 239.) Again, in July of 1883, she repeated the invitation, proposing that "our Society is willing to carry out any line of psychic research in India or Ceylon that the S.P.R. will indicate." An offer of this sort was well within the competence of H.P.B., but, as students of Theosophical history know, it was ignored, and instead, the Society for Psychical Research, after a year or two, sent an immature investigator, Richard Hodgson, to India to examine the charges of the Coloumbs in the *Christian College Magazine*. Mr. Hodgson came to no better conclusion than that H.P.B. was a "fraud" and that her motives, admittedly a guess on his part, were those of a Russian spy! The Hodgson Report has long since been disposed of as without foundation (see *The Theosophical Movement*: 1875-1950), first by Mr. Judge, and more recently

by the researches of Adlai Waterman, whose booklet on the subject is conclusive in its exposé of Hodgson's unreliability, blunders and false statements.

Another Chance

In this century, persons of scientific inclination may have another chance to obtain the cooperation of genuine occultists who know what they are about in instructing Westerners in the ancient knowledge of the occult fraternity. In *The Secret Doctrine* (II 649), H.P.B. spoke of presenting teachings as "hypotheses for *future* scientific appreciation," and she predicted that portions i not the whole of that work would be vindicated in the twentieth century (II, 442). She was even more specific in the Introductory (xxxviii), saying:

> In Century the Twentieth some disciple more informed, and far better fitted, may be sent by the Masters of Wisdom to give final and irrefutable proofs that there exists a Science called *Gupta-Vidya;* and that, like the once-mysterious sources of the Nile, the source of all religions and philosophies now known to the world has been for many ages forgotten and lost to men, but is at last found.

There is an old Masonic saying, "When the materials are ready the architect will appear." So, in respect to help for science in its efforts to broaden the scope of its inquiries to include the hidden side of nature and man, we shall have to wait and see.

Comment on "Theater"

At the conclusion of a drama review in the *Nation* for Feb. 1 Harold Clurman offers some general observations on the present state of the drama:

> The appetite for theatregoing has not abated and I find this good. But the nature of what on the whole is being produced reveals an ever increasing absence of mind. There is little confidence or real belief in anything. All is gesture. The most primitive reactions are the most "honest." Audiences seem to require a "fix" of noise and the disguise of novelty. Laughter is provoked by ragamuffin crudity. All this surface agitation has induced a fundamental passivity; nothing is actively examined.
>
> While the American public professed to be troubled by Watergate, it was apparently incapable of recognizing Nixon's perfidy years before the event, when anyone with eyes and natural instinct could see that the man and his ilk were, to say the least, of an inalterably fraudulent species. The answer to what is wrong with the theatre is, apart from its disorganization and

insane economics, the mood and mental state of the nation as a whole. And if what is preferred above all else is distraction on the least mature level, that broadly speaking is what we are getting.

Origins of Drama

Mr. Clurman's remarks about the theater might qualify as a long footnote or even an appendix to H.P.B.'s article, "Civilization the Death of Art and Beauty." The performing arts, it seems evident, will have to make a new beginning, but this may not be possible until the sources of all true drama are once more restored. As is well known, dramatic art descends, in Western history, from ancient Mysteries, and over many centuries there have been plays that seemed worthy of their origin; but this can hardly be said in the present. A better theater may have to await the renewal of philosophy in the West, for it is from philosophy that a fresh flowering of the arts will become possible. Yet, from time to time, there are fine dramatic renderings, usually the achievement of individuals who manage, through great talent, to free themselves from the institutional degradations which seem to affect all else.

"Respect for the Human Race"

One example of this was provided by the distinguished mimic, Ruth Draper, whose deep affection for human beings enabled her to give performances of universal appeal. Writing in the *Atlantic* for October, 1958, Iris Origo quoted Brooks Atkinson, *New York Times* drama critic, on Ruth Draper's work: "She is not astonishing you with the brilliance of her talent. She is modestly asking for your interest in various characters, most of whom represented her respect for the human race." Miss Origo continued:

> It was this respect which, for all the sharpness of her observation, took the bitterness out of Ruth's mockery. The laughter she aroused was never that which, when its echoes have died down, leaves one feeling chilled and sad: her audiences, at the evening's end, took with them a taste as sweet and crisp as a ripe apple. . . .
>
> The origins of the drama, in every Western land, are rooted in one great theme: the journey of Everyman between Good and Evil. Ruth Draper's sketches, too—slight as some of them were—followed that great tradition; they too were morality plays, stories of Everyman's meeting with Vanity and Passion, with Folly and Despair, but always moving in an ordered, stable world, in which at the last it is goodness that prevails.

Pretensions of "Art"

Writing in the *Nation* for March 22, Burton Bendow turns a review of Jacques Barzun's *The Use and Abuse of Art* into a concise survey of the cultural decline to which H.P.B. refers in "Civilization the Death of Art and Beauty." In Mr. Barzun's opinion, the decline began in the nineteenth century when art "stole the thunders of a dying God and took on the airs of a full-blown religion." It was widely claimed that "art spoke as the conscience of a godless world and denounced iniquities and cried out for reform." At the same time there was the "bogus official art that aped the successes of the past and had the support of the academies and the philistines." The art devoted to "causes" grew shrill and bitter. Mr. Bendow summarizes Mr. Barzun's analysis:

> Revolutionary art became an assault on our sensibilities, a weapon to jolt us out of our bourgeois complacency. Realists who professed to be leading us to utopia rubbed our noses in squalor. . . . The result was an art that grew more and more narrow in scope, and more and more violent in its effort to be shocking. And an audience that grew more and more numb and bored, and either demanded stronger shocks and madder outrages or could bear no more and melted away.

Frantic Changes

The attempt of art to fulfill a priestly function was dealt with critically last year by Octavio Paz (in the May 1974 *Atlantic*). For the ancients, Paz pointed out, beauty was a subordinate quality; the work of art gained primary value through its symbolic reference. These balances were lost in the change which took place in the nineteenth century: "The modern religion of art continually circles back on itself without ever finding the path to salvation: it keeps shifting back and forth from the negation of meaning for the sake of the object to the negation of the object for the sake of the meaning." Mr. Paz sees hope for a renewal of meaning in art only by the restoration of craftsmanship and its communal functions. It is time, he says, to put an end to the cult of "art" and seek the natural roots of the beautiful in human experience of daily life. Another portion of Mr. Bendow's review leaves little doubt of this conclusion:

> As to the art of the *avant-garde*, it turned on itself and shook off the bad habits of the past with the convulsive starts of a man who gave up smoking. Cults and sects, credos and manifestoes, succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity, each one repudiating the practices of its immediate predecessor

and laying claim to a more rarefied abstraction or a more unfettered spontaneity. Every form of art struggled to erase every trace of resemblance to its former self. Poets renounced the use of verse. Painters rejected every shape that the eye might recognize. Writers discarded plot, description and character drawing, and wrote the *anti-roman*.

elf-Destruction

Composers threw away harmony, rhythm, musical notes and the instruments that produced them, and made noise. Even this noise-making followed no predetermined plan but was left to the whim of the performer. The end was suicide—disposable art, the empty canvas labeled white-on-white, the mobile that destroys itself, the sonata that consists of three minutes of silence.

There is hardly a need to add to such criticism. Where, then, will the rebirth of the arts begin? We should not, perhaps, speak of "the arts" at all, for a while, but remember simply that the ancient Greeks had no word for art, although they did have a term for craftsmanship. Great art flowers only in a period of renewed philosophy, requiring themes of profound meaning to spur the imagination. There can be no real art, as H.P.B. put it, without "a just appreciation of the beautiful in Nature, or without poetry and high religious, hence, metaphysical aspirations!"

"Eternal Values"

Something of this point of view is found expressed in the posthumously published essays of Harold Goddard, *Alphabet of the Imagination* (Humanities Press). Goddard, who taught English literature at Swarthmore for thirty-seven years, died in 1950, a little before the appearance of his best known work, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (in two volumes, University of Chicago Press). An admirer of Blake, Goddard's consistent effort throughout his educational career was toward awakening the power of imagination in his students. (His first book, incidentally, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism,* which was his doctoral thesis, appeared in 1908, and has since been restored to print by Hilary House Publishers.) Some paragraphs of a review of *Alphabet of the Imagination* (in *Friends Journal* for March 15) by Everett Hunt suggest that classic conceptions of art are still alive in America:

The essays of Goddard, sermonic, philosophical, and literary are aimed at giving us a final vision through the power of the imagination. Today's readers are more in need of this than ever before, and increasingly the critics of our technical and ma-

terialistic society are talking in the language of the eternal values which come from within and above. And Goddard reminds that Emerson says that "within and above are synonymous."

Qualities of True Literature

At this moment in our history Goddard says we need nothing more than a better understanding of the relation between art and religion. Religion and art are two of the main highways (more important than reason) to finding our way into the higher world that humans have discovered.

Goddard finds that this became especially evident for his students who studied Russian literature with him. He observes that the American student is searching for a religion based upon experience. The Russian writers wrote to dramatize their own experience and they created a world of imaginative literature in which the distinction between poetry and religion almost ceased to exist. He concludes that although Russian novels were written under an autocracy, the feeling of compassion and of mutual forgiveness which they evoke makes the most profound interpretation of the spiritual life in the modern world.

Readers of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy will agree, and some m recall the terms in which H.P.B. spoke of these two great Russi writers, whose work is still very much alive.

"Faith in Man Himself"

Something said by Doris Lessing (in *The Small Personal Voic* about why she reads continuously Tolstoy, Stendahl, Balzac "a the rest of the old giants" gives a light on the quality as well the importance of good literature. Musing on the value of su books, she wrote:

I was not looking for a firm reaffirmation of old ethical values, many of which I don't accept; I was not in search of the pleasures of familiarity. I was looking for the warmth, the compassion, the humanity, the love of people which illuminates the literature of the nineteenth century and which makes all these old novels a statement of faith in man himself.

These are the qualities which I believe are lacking from literature now.